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Bits and Pieces

of Hardin County History

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HENRY CLAY WILLIAMS - 1825–1934

"Uncle Henry" Williams, as he was familiarly known by all in his later years, came to Elizabethtown as a young man of about twenty years of age, the slave of Rev. Samuel Williams, the Presbyterian minister, in about the year 1845. Uncle Henry, as most slaves in this area at that time, did housework and had duties as a servant. The family lived for a time at the residence at 210 Helm Street, and at another time resided on a farm near town.

The late Elmo McClure, author of *Two Centuries in Elizabethtown and Hardin County*, interviewed Uncle Henry in 1932. At that time, he was about 107 years old, quite alert and active for his age. His chief handicap was failing eyesight, quite common among persons his age. His memory was quite keen about people and events, especially about people and events of the Civil War period and in the years following.

To one who had been born in slavery and known that institution for many years, he appeared to have lived a happy and eventful life. He gave, according to McClure, no indication of bitterness or rancor, but rather expressed an affection for those with whom he had lived and worked. He appeared to have enjoyed being a part of the goings-on in the town during those many years. Following the freeing of the slaves, Uncle Henry worked for various families in town, one being that of General Simon B. Buckner, who lived for a time in a part of the large frame house at the corner of West Dixie and Miles Street (now 300 W. Dixie).

Uncle Henry described the town when he first arrived with Rev. Williams, who at that time was a young man also, coming here from Danville. The courthouse was a one-story brick building in the southwest corner of the Public Square, with a porch in the front, facing north, the streets crossing in the center of the Square, the other three sections of the Square being planted with small trees in park-like settings. The town pump was located in the park in front of the present [2006] Huddleston House. The jail was located behind the present Taylor Hotel.

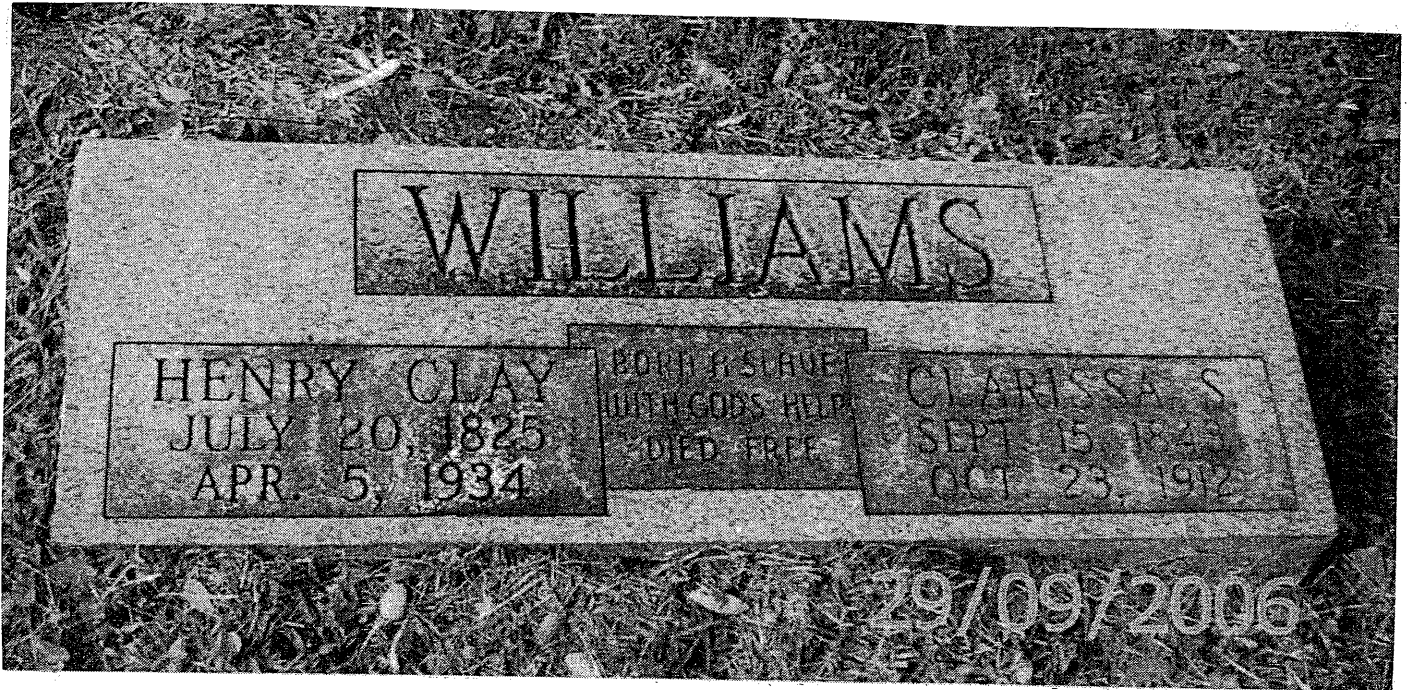
According to Uncle Henry, there was one bank in town, and four or five bars serving spirits. Schools for boys and girls were maintained separately, Rev. Williams being in charge of the female seminary for some time. There were no churches other than the Methodist, Baptist and Presbyterian. Claysville was a separate settlement to the north of town, with a wagon yard, a store, and a tannery. The Wintersmith tavern, later known as the Summit House, stood on the corner [now 102 W. Dixie]. It had a large livery stable in the rear, many colored employees, and a reputation, according to Uncle Henry, for "good eats." Uncle Henry told of working there when it was in its glory, with many servants, a large bar room, and a big stable at the rear with many horses and carriages. It was destroyed in the fire of August 7, 1869, when much of the business district went up in flames, and was not rebuilt.

Uncle Henry's recollections of Civil War events were quite vivid. Rev. Williams purchased a substitute for him, when after the Emancipation Proclamation, colored troops were being taken into the Union Army. He related that General Rousseau, who was one of the first Federal officers with troops in the town, was a great favorite with the colored citizens, quite likely because they felt he was in the struggle to give them freedom. After the Emancipation Proclamation, many of the colored men of the town went into the army. Uncle Henry related that he was pressed into service with the army for a short time in about 1862, when the Federal troops were moving south on the way to Nashville, driving a wagon. This was a part of the army under General Fremont. He stayed with the army for a short time, however, and during that time he remembered being in a fight at the Tennessee River and hauling logs to make pontoons for crossing the river. He related that on one side of the river were the Confederates under Generals Buckner, Hood, Bragg and Forrest, and on the opposite side were Generals Thomas, Rosecrans, Nelson and Fremont with their troops. According to Uncle Henry, General Hood left with his men during the night and the Union forces surrounded the "rebels" the next morning.

Uncle Henry told also of being in Elizabethtown during Morgan's Christmas raid. Rev. Williams and his family were living at 210 Helm Street at that time. When it because apparent that Morgan would take Elizabethtown, his master, Rev. Williams, sent him to bury a quantity of money, about $2,000 in gold, according to Uncle Henry. He had finished the task and was returning to the house a few minutes later when a black-whiskered man in rags stepped from behind the corner, leveled a rifle at the frightened servant, and demanded to know if he had seen his master hiding any money. The servant was very "ignorant" on the subject and insisted that he had not. The ragged trooper questioned him at great length and finally released him. Uncle Henry chuckled as he recalled how he had saved his master's money.

He recalled that several men from around Elizabethtown were members of Morgan's cavalry an that the only times they could get home to visit their families were when Morgan was raiding through the state. On such raids, Morgan gathered men, money and horses, and was welcomed in many homes in the area. Uncle Henry stated that Morgan had farmers haul fence rails in from the country to use in burning the bridges and trestles on the railroad from Muldraugh Hill to Green River.

With regard to the Mexican War, Uncle Henry recalled that the young men of the town who belonged to the military company loaded their boxes and trunks in wagons pulled by four mules and were driven to West Point and loaded on steamboats for the trip down the Ohio and the Mississippi, en route to the war.



Stone, Elizabethtown City Cemetery

Uncle Henry and his wife Clarissa, who were "married" before emancipation, were the parents of fifteen children, of whom ten – six girls and four boys – were living in 1930. The late Nelson Williams and Zesper Williams were grandsons.

According to his Death Certificate, he died April 1, 1934, at the age of more than one hundred years. A highly respected colored citizen, he was the oldest member of the Elizabethtown Presbyterian church and was at that time its sole surviving member of the colored race. Funeral services were held at the Presbyterian Church by the pastor, Rev. Robert Clayman. Burial was in the Elizabethtown City Cemetery.

M. J. J.

(Sources: McClure, *Two Centuries in Elizabethtown and Hardin County;* C. H. Connor, Black History Gallery; Commonwealth of Kentucky, Certificate of Death; Stone in Elizabethtown City Cemetery.

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THE LIVERY STABLE

In the era from Kentucky's settling in the late seventeen hundreds up to the early nineteen hundreds the livery stable played an important part on the lives of the local citizens. For more than 100 years in this period, the horse was the only dependable means of transportation, besides the feet, and boats.

The livery stable was the place where all the sports of the day loafed, where the traveling salesman came to hire a rig and where all people who didn't own their own outfit, or were visiting, had to go to find a away to get to their destination. A twenty- or thirty-mile trip by horse and buggy was a real venture over the type roads then encountered, even in the best of weather in summer. In winter few but the saddle rider could go far on his trusty steed.

In Elizabethtown there were at times three or more livery stables. Each had its buggies, carriages and saddle horses. The last one I remember was on South Main Street where the Board of Education is now. I remember well the night it burned.

There is no present-day equal to the aroma of a livery stable. There was the oily smell of harness hung in readiness for the traveler's use. This became mixed with the sweet and somewhat musty odor of hay and grain for fuel for the horse.

Most overpowering of all was the scent of ammonia and manure mixed with horse linament that cut acridly through the others to dominate the smell of all. It was not a disagreeable scent, and in a few minutes one became accustomed to it. It was a pungent, alive odor, mixed with the smell of horse flesh and tasted with the constant chomping, moving and stamping of horses in the background.

There were other uses for the stack of hay always handy at the livery stable. The town drunk would often be found asleep in the hay where he had kept warm through a wintry night when he dared not go home. Many times the steel tine of a hayfork rang out as it struck a hidden or forgotten bottle tucked in the hay for safekeeping.

The livery stable was replaced by the garage in time as gas buggies became popular, but no garage ever became the center of interest or occupied the place in the community that was held by the livery stable.

Life has sped up with the automobile, and the days of placid contemplation and leisurely conversations have become a part of past history as civilization began to get in high gear for the present jet and space age. Progress, they call it.

M. J. J.

(Source: An old newspaper clipping.)

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Mary Jo and World War II

(CONTINUED FROM LAST ISSUE)

Sometime between Thanksgiving and Christmas, a call came to the Embassy for clerical help for the office of the Political Adviser to the Supreme Allied Commander in the Mediterranean Theater at Caserta, near Naples. I quickly volunteered to go. I welcomed the chance to get back to working with the Army, as I never felt very much at home among the "stuffed-shirt" diplomats. To me, they had been abroad so long in their careers that, while they were American citizens, they didn't truly represent the United States of that time. I had come from war-time America, and these career Foreign Service people had never experienced that.

Ambassador Kirk was nominally the Political Adviser; however, he was in Rome, and Carmel Offie, a career diplomat, ran the day-to-day operations of the Caserta office. I was thrilled that the office was located in the Royal Palace, which was magnificent–Italy's answer to the Palace at Versailles.

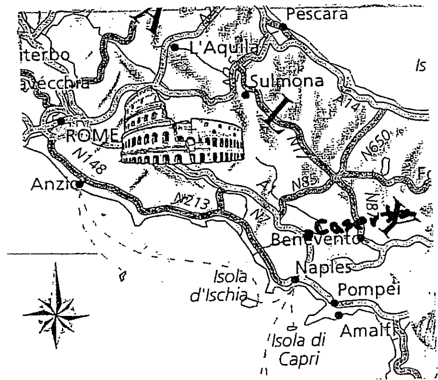
That office DID need help. There were about ten girls assigned there, to staff an office which operated eighteen hours a day. They all lived together in one large apartment on Via Appia. I was given a nice room there which I shared with Barbara Johnson, whom I liked and had known previously in Rome.

The cryptographic section operated with two shifts, and night duty rotated among all the girls. The "day" shift worked from nine to give, while the "afternoon" group came in at two o'clock and was supposed to leave at ten. Actually, we left at night when we had cleaned up all the work, whether it be nine, ten, or eleven. Transportation was available to take us from our apartment to and from the Palace whenever we needed it. Cars picked us up at the apartment at set times and were always available in the courtyard of the Palace to take us home.

I evidently had some aptitude for this work. It was exciting to watch an intelligible message emerge from the groups of random letters. Most messages were decoded on a machine with a typewriter-style keyboard, set in a predetermined way, changed daily. We had two machines, and all of us know how to operate them. However, we did have some systems that required more time-consuming hand work.

I soon became the decoder of "problem" messages. The initial two groups of five letters were supposed to indicate the procedure for decoding. When the other girls couldn't decode a message immediately, they'd toss it to me. I could usually figure out the problem when the indicated method didn't work. In impossible situations, I'd have to ask the sender to retransmit.

I was designated as assistant chief clerk in the code room. I was flattered, but it really didn't mean anything, as Offie was in and out several times a day, telling all of us what to do! He was a bachelor, and we could expect to find him peering over our shoulder any time of the day or night. He was truly the most obnoxious person I've ever worked with. The work schedule for the code room was made out by Mr. Estes who was the administrative officer of POLAD and the only other male member of the staff. He was a bit more understanding than Offie, but characteristic of the other career diplomats I had met. He and his wife had a nice apartment in Caserta.



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The thing that bothered me most when I first went to Caserta was the rain and the cold. None of the buildings were heated go any extent (pretty much the same in Rome, but it wasn't winter when I was there). One night I'd been to a big dance; I came home about midnight and went to bed clad in my winter pajamas, a wool flannel bathrobe, and wool socks. There was NO heat in my bedroom, just damp cold. I shook and shivered for forty-five minutes. I don't think it was the cold as much as it was the dampness. Our house was all stone and marble. With all the rain and snow, and absolutely no heat, my two sheets and seven army blankets didn't help a bit!

I finally got up and took all the bed clothes down the hall into the living room and made my bed on the rug, which was wool, about two inches thick, very warm, two blankets under me and five on top. There was a roaring fire in the living room (it was across the hall and several doors down from my bedroom). The stove was quite similar to our hot water heater at home. I slept snug, warm and comfortable the rest of that night, and since that time have moved to a room next to the living room.

We'd been promised a better living arrangement, and finally about the first of February, we got two floors in a newer building. Each floor had a central room with a stove in the middle and three or four bedrooms off that. Each apartment was smaller than the one large one which we had had, and much easier to heat.

We always bathed at the palace during office hours–we didn't have hot water at our apartments. There were many baths in the palace. I always used the same one. I don't know if we were assigned to that particular one, or if it was just convenient to the office. The water was usually lukewarm, never hot, but at least most of the time it wasn't icy. There was an Italian woman who drew the water and cleaned the tub after each use.

The rain depressed me, I wasn't accustomed to such hard work and long hours, the food was heavy and perhaps I was a little bit homesick. I had two bouts of severely upset stomach in January and spent a few days in the hospital in Naples each time. The ward was heated, of course, and I slept warm for a change.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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THE DISCOVERY, PURCHASE AND SETTLEMENT OF THE COUNTRY OF KENTUCKIE IN NORTH AMERICA

There is in the files of the Hardin County Historical Society a small reprint of a booklet by Alexander Fitzroy, printed in London by H. Coldney, No. 15, Pater-Noster Row, in the year MDCCLXXXVI (1786) titled as above. The title also includes the phrase ". . . SO FAMOUS FOR ITS FERTILITY OF SOIL, PRODUCE, CLIMATE, MINERALS, QUADRUPEDES, CURIOSITIES, TRADE, RAPID POPULATION, RELIGION, &c. &c. The whole illustrated by a new and accurate map annexed." The map included is John Filson's "New and Accurate Map of Kentucke and the Country Adjoining," printed herein. Some extracts from the book are follow.

"This fertile country was first discovered in the year 1754, and from that period remained unexplored till about the year 1767, when one John Finley, and some others, trading with the Indians, travelled over its region. The pleasing appearance greatly engaged their attention; but, some time after, disputes arising with the Indians, they were obliged to decamp, and return to the place of their residence; where, communicating the discovery to Colonel Daniel Boon, and a few others, it was conceived to be an interesting object; and they agreed, in the year 1769, to undertake a journey to explore it. . . .

". . . It is at present divided into three counties; to wit, Lincoln, Fayette, and Jefferson; of which Fayette and Jefferson are bounded by the Ohio, and the River Kentuckie separates Fayette on its north side, from the other two. There are, at present, eight towns laid out and building, and many more are proposed. Louisville, at the Falls of the Ohio, and Beard's Town are in Jefferson county; Harrodsburg, Danville and Boonsborough, in Lincoln county; and Lexington, Leestown, and Greenville, in Fayette county; the two last being on Kentuckie river. At these, and many other places, inspecting houses are established for tobacco, which is cultivated to great advantage, although not altogether the staple of the country. . . . .

"The fish common to the waters of the Ohio are, the Buffalow, of a large size; the Catfish, sometimes exceeding 100 weight; the Salmon, weighting 30 pound; the Mullet, Rock, Perch, Garfish, Eel, Suckers, Sunfish, and other hookfish in abundance. There are large subterranean aqueducts, from which springs arise in many parts, producing fine hookfish in variety. On these waters, the Geese and Ducks are amazingly numerous. The fowls are the Turkey, which is very large, the Pheasant, and the Partridge; and the birds, the Paraquet, resembling a Parrot, but much smaller. The Ivory-bill Wood-cock, of a whitish color, with a white plume, and its bill of pure ivory, a circumstance very singular in the plumy tribe. The Greatowl, remarkable in its vociferation, sometimes making a noise like a man in extreme danger and difficulty.

"Among the native animals are the Urus or Zorax, called here the Buffalow, much resembling a large bull. Their weight is from five to ten hundred, are excellent meat, and their skins make fine leather. So numerous were they before the wantonness of early adventurers destroyed numbers of them, that above one thousand have been seen in a drove at once. There still remain a great number in the exterior parts of the settlement. They feed upon cane and grass, as other cattle, and are innocent harmless creatures when not disturbed. There are still to be found many Deer, Elk and Bears. The waters have plenty of fine Beavers, Otters, Minks, and Muskrats; nor are the animals common to other parts wanting, such as Foxes, Rabbits, Squirrels, Rackoons, Ground hogs, Pole-cats and Opossams. Most of the species of the domestic quadrupeds have been introduced since the settlement, such as horses, cows, sheep, and hogs, which are prodigiously multiplied; being suffered to run in the woods without a keeper, and only are brought home when wanted.

. . .we may conclude that Kentuckie contains, at present, upwards of 60000 souls; and numbers are daily arriving. . . . Schools for education are formed, and a College is founded by act of assembly, under the trustees of

Kentuckie, and land appropriated for its use. An excellent Library is bestowed upon this seminary by the Reverend Doctor Todd of Virginia. Religion is tolerated here, and Presbyterian, Anabaptists, Calvanists, Lutheran, and Protestants Congregations are formed under able pastors.

"Among the natural curiosities, the Winding Banks, or rather precipices, deserve the first place. The astonished eye beholds three or four hundred feet of a solid perpendicular limestone rock; in some parts a fine white marble curiously arched, pillared, or blocked up, into fine building stones; the land above being level, and crowned with fine groves of red cedar. Caves are found in this country amazingly large; in some of which persons travel several miles under a fine limestone rock, supported by curious arches and pillars; in most of them runs a stream of water. Near the head of Salt River is a substerraneous lake, or large pond. There is another which operates like an air furnace, and contains much sulphur; in either of which the traveller has a perfect idea of primeval darkness. . . . Many fine salt springs, whose places appear in the map, constantly emit water, which being manufactured, afford great plenty of fine salt for all the inhabitants, and exports some to the Illinois. The amazing herds of Buffalows which used to frequent these places to lick, fill the traveller with astonishment, more especially when he beholds the prodigious roads they have made to some of them, as if leading to a large populous city, and vast spaces of ground reduced to naked plains, as if spoiled by a ravaging enemy. These are truly curiosities, and the eye can scarcely be satisfied with viewing them. There are three springs or ponds of bitumen near Green River, which do not form a stream, but disgorge themselves into a common reservoir, and when used in lamps, answer all the purposes of the finest oil. . . .

"In the settlement of Lexington are to be seen curious sepulchres full of human skeletons, which are thus fabricated: First, on the ground are laid great broad stones; on these were deposited the bodies of deceased persons, separated from each other by broad stones, and covered with others supported by side-walls, which were as a basis for the next layer of bodies. In this order they are built without mortar, growing still narrower to about the height of a man. At a salt spring near the Ohio River, very large bones have been found, far surpassing any species of animals in America. The head appears to have been three feet long, the ribs seven, and the thigh-bones about four; one of which is deposited in the library at Philadelphia, and said to weigh 78 pounds. . . .

"A convenient situation for commerce, is the grand hinge upon which the population, riches, and happiness of a country depends. Those who are acquainted with America, know the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers to be the key to the northern parts of the western Continent. These are the principal channels communicating with the sea; and their branches exemplify the great hand of nature, in transfusing them at convenient distances throughout the country. . . . .

"Thus we behold Kentuckie a fertile country, unequalled in the progress of population; the hands of the husbandman and mechanick flourish–hear the praises of our God–an see the foundations of cities and commerce laid, which will shortly exhibit her among the first in the union. **F I N I S .**"

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In the mid 1770's certain Easterners were eying Kentucky and other western lands with a view to erect a great proprietary government and reaping large monetary rewards for themselves, despite he fact that one was actually more safe in the ranks of the tattered Continental troops than on the trails of water courses of the western country. There were also individuals hoping to reap a fortune. George Washington, Col. William Byrd, Patrick Henry and Thomas Marshall were only a few of the outstanding figures in this great movement to acquire land in the West. John Filson, Kentucky's first historian, was of this group, but there were many others. Filson on his own initiative or otherwise produced the first adequate written account and large-scale map of this new country in 1784. His book of 118 pages was published in Wilmington, while his map was brought out in Philadelphia.

According to a publication by Dr. Willard Rouse Jillson, from Filson's original treatment and condensed to barely ten printed pages, the article above by Alexander Fitzroy, published in 1786 in London, rewritten assuredly from Fison's original treatment, is the first and most notable plagiaristic incident in Kentucky literature. A copy of Filson's map is included.

(Source: Jillson, Willard Rouse, *The Kentuckie Country.* H. L. & J. B. McQueen, Inc., Washington, D. C., 1931.)

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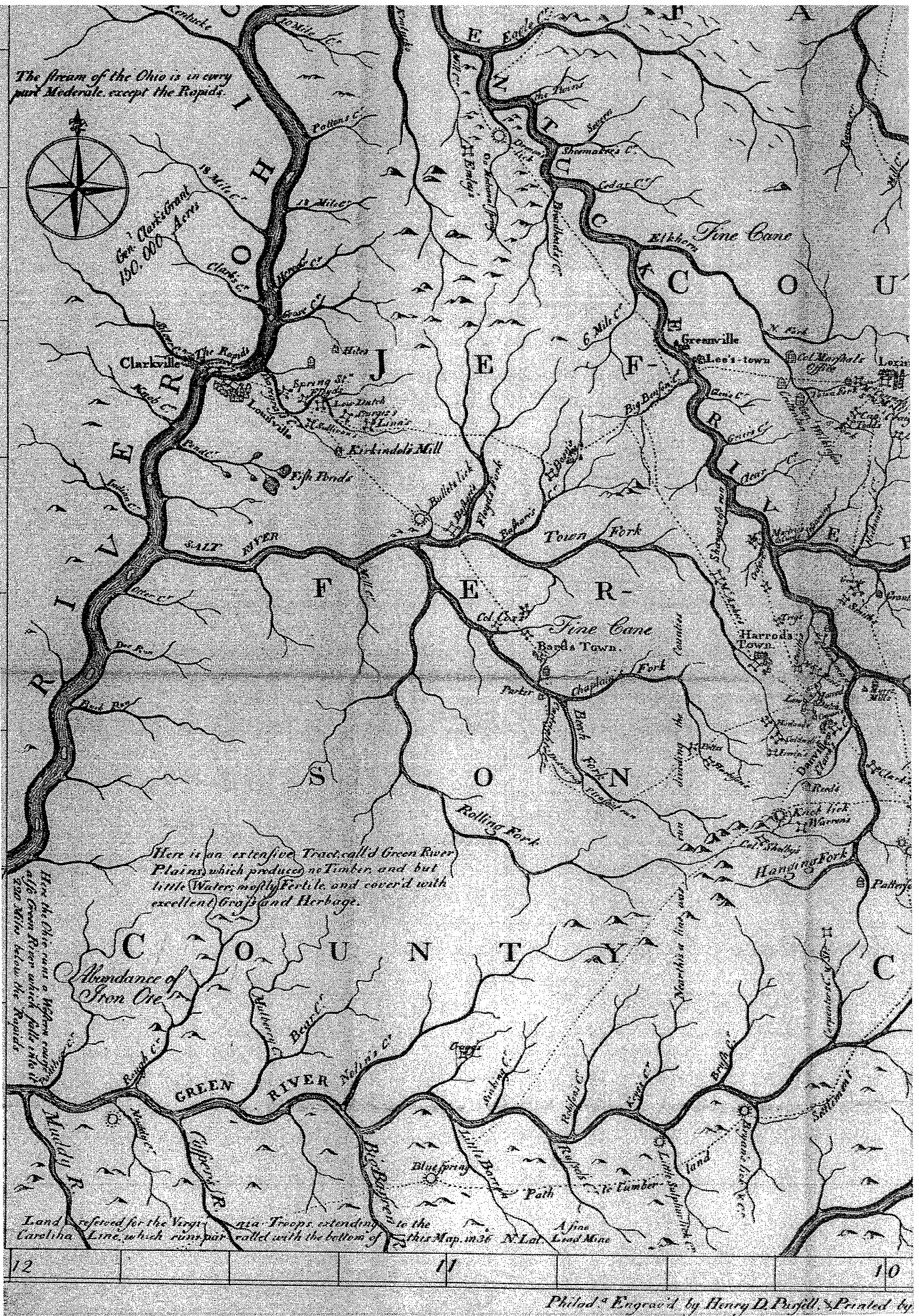

Section of map by John Filson, 1784.
Note near the bottom that Rough Creek and Nolin Creek, among others, flow into Green River.

AN OLD-FASHIONED ICE HOUSE

(Source: *The Elizabethtown News,* January 14, 1930.)

Fifty or sixty years or so ago, people in the small towns and in the country had their own ice houses. These ice houses were chambers dug in the ground twenty to twenty-five feet deep and sixteen to eighteen feet square in which was stored many tons of ice during the winter time when the ice was frozen to a sufficient thickness on the ponds or the rivers. This ice was covered over with a great abundance of straw. There was a roof over this old-fashioned ice house, a door to enter it and lattice steps to go down into it. In these ice houses, when properly built and protected, ice would last all the summer time.

In those days ice was a real luxury. Many people did not have ice houses but in case of sickness ice could always be obtained without charge by people who were so unfortunate as not to have it. Many times it was transported from five to ten miles in cases of fever. In the homes that had no ice houses they had to depend on water fresh from the spring for a cool drink in the summer time. They could not have refrigerators in their homes, and the butter and such other things that needed cold were kept sitting in the water running from a spring to a dairy house.

These old ice houses have passed out of use with the manufacture of ice which is a very cheap process and makes the frozen chunks practically as cheap as putting them up in the winter time into the old ice houses. Under the manufacture of ice, southern states like Florida, where the water never freezes, have just as great an abundance of ice in the summer as Minnesota and Maine. The old homes which enjoyed the luxury of ice houses could make home-made ice cream in the hot months of July and August. They could also keep their milk cool and their butter firm in refrigerators. There was another use in the old days when the sideboard cut a figure in the home, a small lump of ice tinkled in the glass with the water and the sugar after another part was added to that which is now contraband under the laws of our country.

There is still a greater development of manufactured ice, that is the usual process of the ice factory, and that is the individual installation in hotels and homes of the electric refrigerator where ice is made every day to meet the demands of the guests of the hotels or the inmates of the homes. This electric refrigerator is a wonderful development, luxury and comfort for the home and of course can only be used where there is electricity to produce it. However, thousands and thousands of homes in our country are now equipped with an outfit which manufactures ice every day to suit the demands of the family. This is a great improvement over the old-fashioned ice house which has practically passed out of existence except in a few remote sections of the country.

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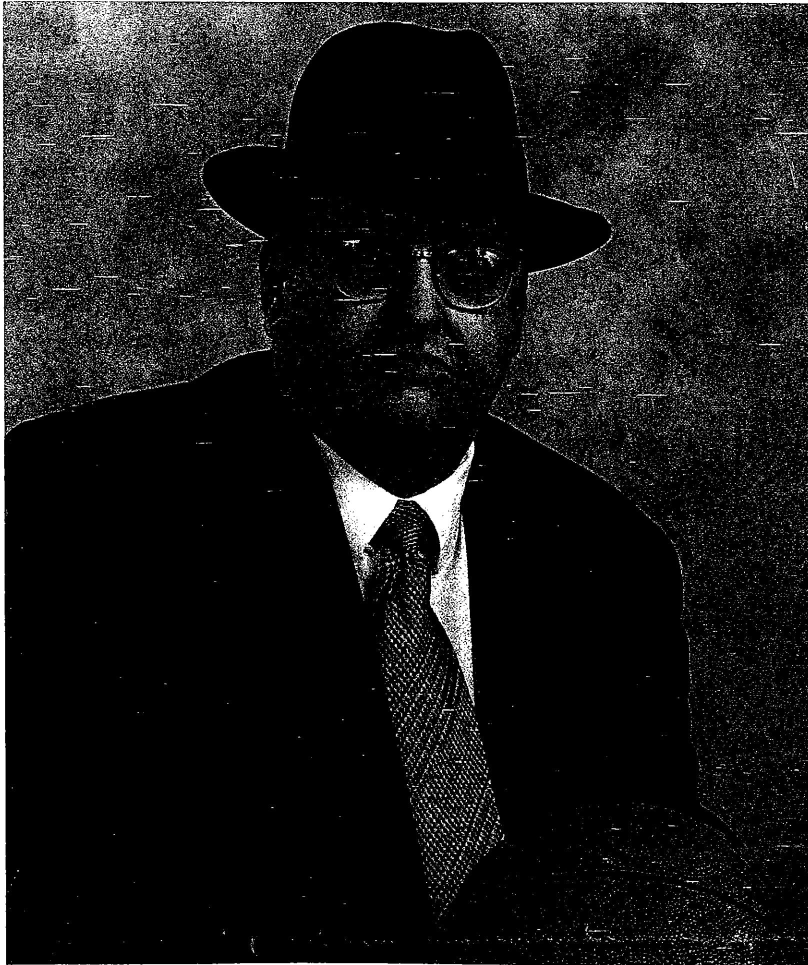

ADOLPH RUPP, THE COACH

During the 42 years he coached at the University of Kentucky, Adolph Rupp (1901-1977) raised basketball to near-religious status in Kentucky. Basketball took its place next to horses, coal, and bourbon as one of the cultural icons that characterizes the state. Rupp's teams won 880 games, four national championships, and one Olympic gold medal. There was a flip side to all this success—the Kentucky team was suspended for the 1952-53 season after a point-shaving scandal, and Rupp was heavily criticized for taking so long to integrate his program.

Adolph Rupp grew up in Kansas, the son of immigrant farmers. He played three years of varsity basketball at the University of Kansas, but never scored a point. He began his coaching career in Kansas, but soon moved on to Iowa and then Illinois. The University of Kentucky hired him in 1930. Rupp's genius for public relations and his team's winning ways combined to make Kentucky basketball a statewide phenomenon, a point of pride around which Kentuckians of all stripes still rally.

Adolph Rupp is portrayed by Edward B. Smith, who teaches theater and performance courses in the Communication Arts Department at Georgetown College. Smith is a graduate of Georgetown College and earned a doctorate at the University of Texas. He developed and directs Kentucky On Stage: The Performing Kentucky Authors Project, an annual event that brings Kentucky literature to the state.

Kentucky Chautauqua is an exclusive presentation of the Kentucky Humanities Council, Inc., with statewide support from the Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels and regional funding from other groups.

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ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT MEETING

The Hardin County Historical Society will meet Monday evening, October 23, 2006, at the State Theater Gallery, 209 West Dixie Avenue, in downtown Elizabethtown. The buffet dinner, catered by Back Home, will be served at 6:30 PM.

Adolph Rupp, the Coach, will be our guest speaker. Rupp appears in the person of Edward B. Smith of Cynthiana, Kentucky, in one of the Kentucky Chautauqua series. Kentucky Chautauqua is an exclusive presentation of the Kentucky Humanities Council, Inc. and the National Endowment for the Humanities, with statewide support from the Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels and other regional funding.

For dinner reservations, telephone Mary Jo Jones, 270-765-5593, by NOON, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 20. If you find later than you can attend, phone Mary Jo, as there are occasional cancellations, On the other hand, if you make a reservation and DO NOT ATTEND OR CANCEL, you will be billed for the cost of the meal unless it is taken by a late-comer as indicated above.

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HARDIN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
POST OFFICE BOX 381
ELIZABETHTOWN, KY. 42702

JEFF LANZ
1120 OAK ST.
ELIZABETHTOWN, KY 42701